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SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

Inyo and Mono Counties, California P.O. Box 132, Bishop, CA 93514

NEWSLETTER " The evils of government are directly proportional to the February, 1989
Volume 3, Number 2 tolerance of the people" ---Frank Kent Acting Editor: Kerry Jellison

Hope for a Test Ban Treaty

A main objective of nuclear arms control advocates has always been to achieve a complete ban on the testing of nuclear weapons. The first successful nuclear weapon was tested by the United States in 1945, and since then over 700 tests have been conducted. This has fanned the flames of the arms race between the US and Soviet Union. There are now over 50,000 of these devastating weapons in the combined stockpiles of the superpowers. What follows is a brief analysis of the history of US testing and treaties, the need for a Comprehensive Test Ban, and its current prospects in Washington.

Historical Background

On July 16, 1945, a bomb was exploded near Alamogordo, New Mexico, triggering the start of US nuclear weapons buildup. For the next 18 years nuclear weapons were detonated in the atmosphere by the United States over the South Pacific and the Southwestern part of this country. In March of 1954 a 15-megaton bomb was exploded at the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, and several Japanese fishermen on a trawler nearby were contaminated by the radiation. This incident, coupled with increasing strontium-90 levels in human bone and milk samples, intensified public fear of testing.

In 1958 the Soviets unilaterally halted testing, but the cold war persisted, and negotiations toward a test ban faltered. In 1961 the Soviets resumed their testing program.

The Partial Test Ban (PTB) Treaty: 1963

In June of 1963 President Kennedy announced a unilateral US moratorium on testing as long as other nations refrained. Within the year the US, Britain, and the Soviet Union had signed the PTB Treaty. This banned testing in the atmosphere, in space, and underwater, basically forcing it underground. France and China never signed the PTB, (France tested weapons in the atmosphere until 1974) but 112 other nations did. The PTB was helpful in curbing the health hazards associated with testing, but not the arms race. One unfortunate result was that public pressure to acheive a CTB subsided.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treay (NPT): 1968

In 1968 the NPT was drafted to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Non-nuclear countries agreed not to acquire weapons, and nuclear countries were bound to pursue negotiations in good faith toward ending the arms race at an early date. Two-thirds of the world's nations have signed, but the same issue is raised at the NPT Review Conference every five years. Non-nuclear nations demand to know why a CTB has not been achieved in the 25 intervening years.

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Nuclear Resistance in 1988

Statistics compiled annually by the Nuclear Resister newsletter show that in 1988, about 4,130 nuclear protest arrests were made in the United States, and another 340 in Canada. The total of 4,470 occurred at 65 locales in almost 60 actions.

As a result of these anti-nuclear arrests, more than 90 people have served or are serving from two weeks to 17 years in prison, while hundreds more served lesser sentences.

A diverse and thriving segment of the disarmament movement engages in the practice of civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action. The examples noted below offer a glimpse of the state of the resistance and point to a dynamic future.

The Nevada Test Site continued to be a national focus for nonviolent direct action. Nearly 2,800 arrests were recorded there last year, two-thirds the annual U.S. anti-nuclear total. A series of actions in March brought at least 8,000 people to the territory of the Western Shoshone Indians, whose 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley with the U. S. government was violated with the establishment of the test site. During ten days of action and education 2,065 arrests were made. More than 1,200 people were arrested during the largest single action of the year on March 12, when a human wave more than one mile in length passed through the barbed wire fence and flowed out to reclaim the desert. No one went to court, however, as Nye County continued its non-prosecution policy adopted in 1987 to deal with the mushrooming protests.

In the state of Missouri, 14 people were arrested as they and 75 supporters from Kansas City and beyond decorated the fences surrounding 10 nuclear missle silos with artwork, photos and other personal mementos.

Released without being charged, many in the group repeatedly returned to occupy some of the same silos and six others, each time causing the temporary deactivation of the nuclear missile sealed below. Eventually the federal authorities filed multiple charges of trespass, plus destruction of property (the $2 padlocks) in some cases. By mid-January, 1989, 11 had been convicted and 4 sentenced to fines, lengthy probation, and jail terms up to 25 months.

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In This Issue:

- American Peace Test
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APT Announces...

Reclaim the Test Site II

Grassroots Nonviolent Resistence at the Nevada Test Site April 7-16,1989

Main Rally on April 15 (Tax Day)

"Taxation Without Annihilation"

The American Peace Test is once again sponsoring a major action at the Nevada Test Site. Camping is available at the ongoing Peace Camp on highway 95 just outside the Test Site. We are welcome to stay there as guest of the Shoshone Native Americans.

Many people from the Eastern Sierra have participated in these actions over the past two years. Some have trespassed onto the Test Site and been arrested; others have attended the rallies and acted as support personnel. **SNAP will be organizing local affinity groups at our March 5th general meeting.**

If you can't attend the meeting call Sylvia Colton at 872-1573 or Kerry Jellison at 873-6445 for more information.

APT needs financial support to organize this demonstration. Please mention that you are with SNAP when you make a contribution. Checks should be made to the American Peace Test, and sent to:

APT
PO Box 26725
Las Vegas, NV, 89126

If you have any other questions, you can call the APT Central Office at (702) 731-9644.

Test Ban ... *cont. from p. 1*

The Threshhold Test Ban (TTB) Treaty: 1974

This Treaty was signed by the US and Soviet Union to limit the size of underground weapons tests to 150 kilotons. In 1976, President Ford and Premier Brezhnev signed the companion Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaty which allowed a series of tests up to 1.5 megatons for peaceful purposes. Although these treaties were never ratified, both nations have pledged to abide by their provisions.

The Need for a CTB

Despite the signing of the PTB Treaty, the nuclear arms race has proceeded relentlessly for over a quarter of a century. In spite of the SALT agreements and the recently ratified INF, the production of new weapons and delivery systems continues unabated. Even a START agreement, which would produce significant reductions in existing stockpiles, would not stop the modernization of our nuclear forces. All treaties so far have failed to stop the build-up. It will require a complete ban on the testing of nuclear weapons to finally halt the spiraling arms race.

Prospects for a CTB

Although most arguments against a CTB have been thoroughly discredited, two still retain some degree of influence among policy-makers in Washington. The first is stockpile testing, and the second is verification that the Soviets could not cheat. These concerns are easily dispelled.

According to Dr. Ray Kidder, a 31-year veteran of the weapons labs, "The public is being hood-winked. The bombs work. They blow up whatever you want them to blow up." Other experts question the need to test warheads that are known to be much more reliable than the missiles that would carry them. The non-nuclear components of the weapons can be checked without nuclear exposions.

The verification problem is easily solved using seismic monitoring. A cooperative effort between the US Natural Resources Defence Council and the Soviet Academy of Sciences has already begun. According to Dr. Josephine Stein, an expert in arms control and national security, "it is virtually impossible to cheat on a test ban," once the full range of verification techniques are brought to bear.

Two international developments will strengthen the prospects of a CTB. On August 5, 1988, 6 nations proposed that the 1963 PTB Treaty should be amended to prohibit underground testing. Once the proposal gains the backing of 39 of the 116 parties to the Treaty, the US, Britain, and Soviet Union are obligated to convene a conference of all the parties. The three nuclear powers must be among the majority supporters in order for the PTB to be amended. Second, the NPT review process begins next year and culminates in the 1990 Review Conference. The test ban has been the central controversy at every previous review so far. The test ban issue has often been debated in the United States as a bilateral affair; these developments should bring the multilateral aspects of the issue to light.

CTB legislation has passed in the US House of Representatives for the past two years, but has met with defeat in the Senate. President Bush has stated his opposition to a testing ban. However, a CTB enjoys widespread support in this country, as well as international support among the signitories of the PTB Treaty. The problems of reliability testing and verification can be overcome. Congressional leaders and grassroots activists have an outstanding opportunity in the coming year to press for negotiations to end our irresponsible history of nuclear testing.

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To order, fill out the following order blank and send **no later than March 7** to:

Kerry Jellison
Rt 2 Box 16A
Bishop, CA 93514

Shirts will be available at the April SNAP meeting, or directly at the above address in late March.

#	color	size	price ($10 per shirt)
		total	

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address:_____

phone:_____

Please make checks payable to:

Sierra Nevada Alliance for Peace

QUESTIONS? Call Kerry Jellison at 873-6445

Next SNAP Meeting

Sunday, March 5 - 7:00 pm

At the next SNAP meeting we will discuss the importance of a Comprehensive Test Ban treaty, and its prospects under the Bush Administration. We will also discuss the APT protest at the Nevada Test slated for April. Members of SNAP who have attended rallies at the test site in the past will be speaking.

Please plan to join us for dessert on Sunday, March 5.

Place: The Scheidlinger's, 393 Mt. Tom Rd., Bishop

Call 873-8439 for directions or information.

Resistance...*cont. from p 1.*

Resistance to the Trident nuclear submarine and its first-strike D-5 missile provided several other significant venues for protest in 1988--occuring at the east and west coast homeports at King's Bay, Georgia, and Bangor, Washington, the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut, where the subs are built, at Cape Canaveral, Florida, where the D-5 is flight tested, and along the tracks of the missile motor trains running from Utah to both Trident homeports.

Other arrests were made at Cape Canaveral where 3 women were sent to jail for six, nine, and twelve months for their Mother's Day action at the Kennedy Space Center, and in Omaha, Nebraska where three religious resisters sought sanctuary at local Catholic churches.

The first Plowshares action of 1988 occurred aboard the USS Iowa at Norfolk, where it sat docked on Easter Sunday, just back from six months in the Persian Gulf. The resisters were charged with only trespassing but were told by the FBI interrogators that a more serious charge was avoided to deny the activists a "showcase trial".

In looking ahead, George Bush has declared his opposition to a comprehensive test ban treaty, insurring that the Nevada Test Site will continue as a focus for nonviolent direct action. The American Peace Test, organizer of last year's Reclaim the Test Site action, is gearing up for Reclaim the Test Site II, with the major action planned for Tax Day, April 15.

National disarmament groups still lack the will to incorporate civil resistance and the tactics of nonviolent direct action into their emerging strategies for peacemaking. Despite this, in the year ahead, nuclear testing, Trident, the missile silos, and Star Wars will be major targets of protest, as a network of communities and groups continue to use nonviolent resistance to confront the arms race in their own back yards. Many of those arrested will continue to bring international law into court, claiming the Bomb itself is an illegal weapon of mass and indiscriminate destruction.

FROM THE EDITOR: Thanks to those who contributed their efforts to the newsletter this month: Mark Bagley, Denise Waterbury, Jeff Cook, and Bob Jellison

A Viewpoint on START

Excerpted from "Nucleus", the quarterly newsletter of the Union of Concerned Scientists, Winter 1989--

The recent initiative announced by Mikhail Gorbachev at the United Nations has given new impetus to the improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is crucial that the Bush administration not allow the momentum created by the INF Treaty and this latest initiative to slip away.

Thus we hope that President Bush will move briskly to resume the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). There are difficult issues remaining to be hammered out before such a treaty becomes reality. But we see no immediate obstacle to doing so, provided both sides are willing to engage in the appropriate give-and-take.

For our part, we believe that completion of the START treaty ought to be the administration's top priority in the arms control area in the months ahead, and we will be undertaking various eforts to move events in that direction. Although START may not provide the sweeping cuts advocated by some, it is a crucial precedent, establishing the framework for future efforts. Most important, it will reduce ballistic-missile warheads on both sides, especially the SS-18, which for years has been considered the most threatening weapon in the Soviet arsenal.

It will be critical that the public, including all UCS sponsors, demonstrate continued support for a program of arms reductions. A recent investigation by one of our allied organizations, the Council for a Livable World, indicates that a START agreement would be embraced by Congress, and furthermore that it is perhaps the most readily achievable arms reduction agreement possible over the near term.

The danger here is that, without broad public support for the treaty, President Bush could fail to move forward decisively. If the United States succumbs to complacency based on the success of the INF Treaty, a far more significant agreement could be doomed. It is also important to remember that, given the demise of the never-ratified SALT II Treaty during the Reagan term, at present there are no bilateral constraints on the strategic nuclear arsenals of the superpowers.

Today, the vigor of our national defense is not in question. Coupled with this, we have as our bargaining partner the most forthcoming Soviet leader ever. In this atmosphere of confidence and opprtunity, we can afford to--indeed, we cannot afford not to--press forward with the START negotiations.

Some of the issues involved in START will be discussed in upcoming issues of the SNAP newsletter. START is an important step in arms reductions. However, it will not slow down the development of new generations of nuclear weapons that fuel the arms race -- for this we need the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT AND ACTION ALERTS

From the Council for a Liveable World:

On February 23, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted 9-11 to reject the nomination of John Tower for Secretary of Defense. A floor vote by the full Senate is expected on March 1st or 2nd.

On February 9, President Bush met with the leadership of the House and Senate, as well as the chairs of the Armed Services Committees to discuss his proposed budget. He has proposed spending $309 billion on the military; the $9 billion increase over last year's level is for inflation. The Budget Committees are expected to begin considering his budget within the next few weeks.

On February 15, Bush announced he would postpone the decision on spending $350 million dollars for a land based missiles, pending further study. He is expected to make that decision early in April.

ACTION REQUEST: Write to your representative and Senators and express your concern about the federal budget deficit. Request their assurance that part of the budget balancing will involve lower military spending. You may want to mention specific problems that need to be addressed: affordable housing, child care and nutrition, health care, debt relief for Third World countries, AIDS research, and/or full payment of UN dues. Suggest that spending money on human resources is our nation's best security.

Where to Write or Call:

Senator Alan Cranston (202-224-3553) -or-
Senator Pete Wilson (202-224-3841)
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Bill Thomas (202-225-2915) (Inyo)
Hon. Richard Lehman (202-225-4540) (Mono)
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

For updated information you can call the Council for a Liveable World:

202-543-0006 (Recorded Message)
202-543-4100 (Questions)

Steering Committee Meeting

Sunday, March 12 at 6:00 pm
Potluck Dinner: Main Dish Provided
Place: 16A Dixon Lane, Bishop
Call 873-6445 for details

We will be discussing the upcoming APT action at the Nevada Test Site, as well as future SNAP activities. The Steering Committee is comprised of interested people. Newcomers are welcome! Please plan to join us.

Sierra Nevada Alliance for Peace
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